The text of the rulebook, cards, and to-do lists has been set in Pfeffer Mediæval. This font was created by Robert Pfeffer as the idealized image of a Carolingian minuscule, the script of Charlemagne, on which our modern Antiqua has been modelled.[3]

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The design of this edition is entirely the fault of Ethan Sherman.[4] Since all components are the properties of their respective creators, it has been amalgamated on a purely non-commercial basis.

[3] https://www.fontspace.com/pfeffer-mediaeval-font-f22256

[4] philologosificabilitudinitatibus@duck.com

I. OVERVIEW

Each player in the game starts at Rivendell with their very own Fellowship of the Ring. The object of the game is to be the first player to defeat the powers of evil, save the countries of Gondor and Rohan, and return to the Shire to write the Red Book of Westmarch and thus preserve your honoured place in history.

To win the game, you must accomplish the following **Six Goals**:

- Go to Moria and defeat the Balrog;
- Go to Edoras and awaken Théoden;
- Go to Isengard and taunt Saruman;
- Go to Pelargir by way of Erech and defeat the Black Fleet;
- Go to Minas Tirith and supplant Denethor; and
- Go to Mount Doom and throw the Ring into the Fire.

The first player to accomplish all six goals and return safely to the Shire is the winner. Once a player wins, all the other players have to Praise Them with Great Praise!

II. CONTENTS

Here's what you'll need to play:

- The Middle-earth gameboard
- A deck of 72 Plot Complication cards. For games with five or more players you might find it useful to use more than one deck
- A set of checklists, one for each player, so they can keep track of what goals they have accomplished
- Obviously a few pencils might be a good idea, too
- A set of appropriate markers, used to represent each of the players in the game, as well as a marker to represent The Dead
- Lastly, an ordinary six-sided die

V. CREDITS

This copy of *The Lord of the Rings Board Game* has been realized (with a few mostly cosmetic alterations) from its detailed description on the Tolkien Sarcasm Page, self-described as "one of the oldest bastions of Tolkien humor on the Web." [1] All credit for concept and rules should go to the site's proprietor, O. Sharp.

The map underlying the gameboard has been reproduced full-size from a 1965 poster by fantasy artist Barbara Remington. When she was commissioned on a tight deadline to produce cover art for *The Lord of the Rings*, she had to rely on second-hand descriptions of the book, unable to procure her own copy; consequentially, her illustrations have at best a very loose correspondence to the text. However, they proved so iconic that she was hired to create a promotional full-colour map of Middle-earth with images from her covers around the border. With its fantastic beasts and swirling colours, it was deemed the perfect backdrop to this frenzied game.[2]

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[1] https://flyingmoose.org/tolksarc/boardgame/lotrgame.htm

[2] https://www.geographicus.com/P/AntiqueMap/lotrposter-remington-1965-5

The Plot Coherence Rule

With this rule, during the course of the game all players must endeavour to explain to the others why the plot *they're* following is internally consistent, and the way Tolkien *should* have written the story. Particularly imaginative explanations can be rewarded with an extra turn. However, if something happens which is particularly hard on the coherence of your plot, you may get assessed a slight penalty.

The Psychotic Rule

An alternative to the Plot Coherence Rule (though not incompatible with it) is to try to come up with the most farcical, farfetched explanations for the actions you take during the game. Extra turns can occasionally be rewarded for particularly hysterical behaviour. (Penalties can be assessed, if necessary, if someone starts taking the game too seriously.)

III. GAMEPLAY

Starting the Game

To begin, all players place their markers at Rivendell. Each receives a checklist from Elrond (or whoever the owner of the game is) listing the Six Goals they have to accomplish to win. The Plot Complication cards are shuffled and set face down on the table. It's up to you to decide who goes first.

Movement

Players move by rolling the die and moving the number of spaces indicated in whatever direction they wish to go. For the most part, it's that simple.

There are, however, Plot Complications which may cause a player to move faster, or slower, or back up, or indeed even drop what they're doing and go in a different direction entirely. There are also special spaces on the gameboard which affect movement; these are described in detail in the next section.

If a player decides before rolling the die that he doesn't want to move, then he can stay put without penalty. However, once the player rolls the die, they are obligated to move. (Particularly clever players, however, can stay put anyway by just moving

repeatedly back and forth between the space they're on and the immediately-adjacent space.)

The spaces

There are a handful of different kinds of spaces on the map. They are listed below in no particular order:

Common spaces

Most of the spaces on the map are common, ordinary spaces.

Rivendell and the Towers of the Teeth

Rivendell is only special in that you start the game there. The Towers of the Teeth are only special in that the space has a name. Apart from that, they're common spaces.

Extra-Turn spaces

There are only two of these on the entire board: one is at Lórien, and the other at Fangorn. If you end your turn by landing directly on one of them, you immediately get a free opportunity to move again. (In addition, landing on the extra-turn space in Fangorn can be beneficial in dealing with Saruman.)

The Interference Rule

The various Fellowships are allowed to interfere with each other. For example, one Fellowship landing in a space occupied by another might try to talk their Frodo out of the Quest; for another example, one player landing in Minas Tirith might leave instructions for the Gates to be shut to members of the *next* Fellowship. A majority ruling of the uninvolved players can be used to determine what effects, if any, result. Particularly farfetched and imaginative forms of interference are particularly encouraged.

The Clever Hobbit Rule

Whenever a player draws a Plot Complication card, or more generally suffers any kind of setback, he can use the Clever Hobbit rule in an effort to get out of it. The Clever Hobbit rule requires that, once the setback is revealed, the player quickly announce a way in which Merry, Pippin, Frodo or Sam suddenly take some unexpected action to solve the problem in truly hobbitlike fashion (for example: faced with a forest fire, Pippin quickly shows the Fellowship "how we used to put out all the annual bonfires in Tuckborough"). Again, solutions that are particularly imaginative, farfetched or humorous - *but in character for the Hobbit selected* - should be most actively encouraged.

IV. ADVANCED RULES

If you're playing this game with a group of other Tolkien fanatics, you can choose to make the game more interesting by implementing some or all of the highly-unstable Advanced Rules given below. They will make the game a great deal more difficult to play sensibly or fairly, but on the other hand the game will be good for a lot more laughs.

The Overland Rule

Rather than confining your movement to the spaces on the gameboard, players can move via direct overland routes at a mutually-agreed-upon speed. At the discretion of the majority of the players, however, overland routes may have difficulties of their own introduced (for example: Caradhras could be used as a way to bypass Moria, but it would take three turns to cross). Such rules can be made up and implemented by a majority of the players as the game progresses. (Please note that this rule cannot be used to avoid Tom Bombadil at the end of the game.)

Goal Spaces

The Goal spaces are more complex, and will be described in detail later. However, you still have to stop at them. In no particular order, they are:

- the Mines of Moria;
- Isengard;
- Helm's Deep;
- Edoras;
- Pelargir;
- Minas Tirith; and
- Mount Doom.

Rohan

The land of Rohan is demarked by orange spaces. There are certain Plot Complications that only affect movement while in Rohan; those take effect on these spaces.

Paths of the Dead

Between Erech and Pelargir is a succession of grey spaces. When a player is accompanied by the Dead, they must stay in this area; the Dead will not follow you around through Rohan or past Pelargir.

Erech

Erech is the space where the Dead wait whenever they are not otherwise occupied.

Mordor

The spaces within Mordor are filled with a dark red. It's a really really really bad place.

The Barad-dûr

Sauron's dark tower of Barad-dûr can be walked into just like any other space, though it's hard to imagine why you would want to. Leaving it, however, is more difficult. If you are trapped in the Barad-dûr, you may only leave it by:

- rolling a six on the die during your turn, which allows you to move *one* space outside; or
- sacrificing two Plot Complication cards you have in your hand, allowing you to roll the die during your turn and move normally; or
- taking three more Plot Complication cards from the deck.

If you've been stranded in the Dark Tower for three consecutive turns, Sauron will give you a single Plot Complication card on the fourth turn and let you go free out of the goodness of his heart.

- 5: Frodo fails and he claims the Ring for himself, but Gollum takes the Ring from him and falls into the Fire. Eagles come out of nowhere and fly everyone out of Mordor, and Frodo feels vaguely guilty about the failure for the rest of his life. Take a Plot Complication card, cross Mount Doom off your list, and move your party to the Towers of the Teeth.
- 6: Frodo fails and he claims the Ring for himself, but Sam realizes his duty as a good servant and pushes Frodo into the Fire. He, too, feels guilty about it for the rest of his life. Take a Plot Complication card and cross Mount Doom off your list.

If, for some reason, you make subsequent trips to Mount Doom, you must stop on the space *and* you must take a Plot Complication card.

Mount Doom and the Destruction of the One Ring

Once you land on Mount Doom, roll the die. The results are as follows:

- 1: Frodo tries to throw the Ring into the Fire, but just can't part with it yet. Try again next turn.
- 2: Gandalf grabs the Ring away from Frodo, yelling that he's a Maia too and should get to take on Sauron *mano-a-mano*. Try again next turn.
- 3: The Eye of Sauron spots you! Roll the die again immediately. If you roll a 1, 2, 3 or 4, move that many spaces away from Mount Doom and hide. If you roll a 5 or a 6, your attempt to hide has failed bitterly. GO DIRECTLY TO THE BARAD-DÛR in your honoured new position as Sauron's captives.
- 4: Frodo throws the Ring into the Fire. Cross Mount Doom off your list; you do not need to take a Plot Complication card.

Plot Complication Spaces

A number of the spaces on the map have red borders; these are the spaces where Plot Complication cards are dispensed. You cannot pass through these spaces without stopping; regardless of the roll on the die, you must stop when you arrive on one of them.

On the Plot Complication spaces, you stop and draw a Plot Complication card. The Plot Complication spaces are:

- Weathertop;
- Dunland;
- the Dead Marshes;
- the Black Gate;
- Osgiliath; and
- the Pass of Cirith Ungol.

Tom Bombadil

When heading for the Shire you *must* stop when you land on this space, and you *must* lay down all the Plot Complication cards you may be holding so that all can see what secrets you've been hiding. Tom didn't get a chance to meet you on the way *to* Rivendell in this game, so it's only fair you should stop there and say hello on your way *back*.

The Shire

Once you've completed all your goals and returned to the Shire, you win the game. However, you have to land *directly* on the Shire; if you're standing one space away from it and roll a two or a four, for example, no amount of clever finagling will get you onto the proper space during that turn.

If you make subsequent trips through Minas Tirith after Denethor is supplanted, you must stop at the space but you do not need to take a Plot Complication card.

Minas Tirith and the Supplantation of Denethor

Once you have arrived at Minas Tirith, roll a six-sided die. Interpret the results as follows:

- 1: Denethor seems really glad to see you. He greets Aragorn warmly and takes him to the Vaults of Lore. He locks him in. Try again next turn when Aragorn gets free.
- 2: Boromir shows up unexpectedly and demands to know what's going to happen to his pension payments. Try again next turn.
- 3: Denethor agrees to give Aragorn the crown, but only if Aragorn will prove his loyalty to Gondor by marrying Ioreth. Try again next turn when Aragorn's less nauseated.
- 4, 5: Denethor is satisfied that Aragorn is indeed the heir of Elendil and grants him the kingship of Gondor. Take a Plot Complication card and cross Minas Tirith off your list.
- 6: Denethor goes crazy, tries to kill Faramir in Rath Dínen and finally dies in a horrible suicide. Take a Plot Complication card and cross Minas Tirith off your list anyway.

Plot Complications

Whenever you land on a Plot Complication space, or you're instructed to take a card by a Goal space, you take a card from the Plot Complication deck and read it. Unless the card specifically says "Hang onto this card," you *must* immediately reveal it to the other players, announce its contents, and take whatever action is described on the card. The card then goes into a "discard" pile.

If the card says "Hang onto this card", however, you keep the card in your hand until you decide you're ready to play it. To play a card you're holding, you likewise reveal it and announce its contents, act on it, and then discard it. You can play the cards you are holding at any time.

Sacrificing Cards

Towards the end of the game, you may have a player who has completed all six of their Goals and is on their way back to the Shire. The other players in the game may wish to slow them down. Therefore, once a player has completed all of their Goals the other players can slow them down by sacrificing any two Plot Complication cards they may be holding.

It works like this: By revealing and sacrificing two Plot Complication cards they are holding, a player can force another player to *lose* a *turn*. As well, *two* players can sacrifice *one card each* in order to make a third player lose a turn. The instructions on the cards themselves are not acted upon, with the lone exception of the Narya card (described below). The sacrificed cards are added to the discard pile, and the player selected as victim loses their turn.

This tactic can only be used on players who have all of their Goals completed.

The Narya Card

One of the cards you are permitted to hang onto is the Narya card, Narya being Gandalf's Elven Ring. If you hold this card, be careful not to show it to anybody. It's a secret. If you ever reveal it to anybody, you lose a turn. If someone correctly guesses you have it, you lose a turn. If someone guesses you have it but you don't, *they* lose a turn. If someone else takes this card from you, it is immediately revealed to all and discarded and *both* of you lose a turn.

Note that having this card will automatically force you to lose a turn when you are compelled to reveal it at Tom Bombadil's.

- If a player who has the Dead with him ever rolls a six, the Dead will *immediately chicken out* and *return to Erech*. When this happens, the Dead are again available to any player who lands on Erech. The player who lost the Dead must go back to Erech to reclaim them.

Once a player has successfully taken the Dead and landed on Pelargir, the Dead will return to Erech to await the next player. Meanwhile, the player who has defeated the Corsairs may cross them off his list and take a Plot Complication card.

If you make subsequent trips through Pelargir after defeating the black fleet of the Corsairs, you have to stop but you don't have to take a card. If you pass through Erech again, note that the Dead will *never* accompany you again once you've captured the fleet.

Pelargir, Erech and the Paths of the Dead

In order to defeat the black fleet of the Corsairs, each player has to summon the Dead Men of Dunharrow from their uneasy resting-place at Erech. Once a player brings the Dead to Pelargir, their victory is assured. The problem, however, is this: no matter how many players there are in the game, there is only *one* group of the Dead available to do all the work.

Special rules apply to the Dead, and to the grey spaces comprising the road between Erech and Pelargir. Once a player lands on Erech, the Dead will accompany him; he must then take the Dead to Pelargir to stop the black fleets of the Corsairs. In these spaces, the following rules apply:

- Only one player at a time may be accompanied by the Dead. Other players who want to defeat the Corsairs will have to *wait* for the Dead to return to Erech.
- When a player is accompanied by the Dead, he must stay in the grey spaces between Erech and Pelargir. If they leave this area and try to take the Dead elsewhere, the Dead will return to Erech to await whatever player can pick them up next.

Precedence of cards

Hopefully, you won't have any situations where cards conflict with one another and make a horrendous tangle of the rules. If you do, however, straighten it out with this rule: Cards played later in the game take precedence over cards played earlier. *Hopefully* that'll straighten everything out.

The Goals

Each of the players has to accomplish the Six Goals which will free Middle-earth from tyranny and make for a really exciting book. The goals can be accomplished in any order. As each player completes a goal, they check it off of their list and continue with the other goals. Once all six goals are completed, they can race to the Shire to win the game. Be warned, however, that there are Plot Complications which may force you to do certain goals over again.

The Balrog in Moria

Once you have landed on Moria, roll a six-sided die. The results are as follows:

- 1: Gandalf can't get the door to the Mines open. Try again next turn.
- 2: You all get hopelessly lost in the Mines. Try again next turn.
- 3: Gimli insists on reciting the entire Book of Mazarbul aloud, as a tribute to Balin. Two members of the Fellowship get captured and eaten by trolls in the meantime. Try again next turn.
- 4, 5: Gandalf and the Balrog plunge into the abyss. You have been successful. Take a Plot Complication card and check the Balrog off your list.
- 6: The Balrog falls to its death, but instead of taking Gandalf along with him it takes Pippin by accident. Check the Balrog off your list. You don't need to take a Plot Complication card, but you can if you want to.

Helm's Deep and the Healing of Théoden

Helm's Deep is a standard Plot Complication space most of the time: you have to stop when you reach it, and you have to take a card. In the event that you have been sent here from Edoras while seeking Théoden, however, you may roll the die with the results as follows:

- 1, 2, 3: You *just* missed him! Théoden just rode back to Edoras. On your next turn, go back to Edoras and try again there.
- 4: Éomer tries to kill Aragorn, demanding to know Aragorn's intentions towards his sister. Try again next turn.
- 5, 6: Gandalf heals Théoden, and Théoden makes his heroic stand against the armies of Saruman. Take a Plot Complication card and check Théoden off your list.

On subsequent trips through Helm's Deep, it acts as a standard Plot Complication space as described above.

Edoras and the Healing of Théoden

Once you have reached Edoras, roll a six-sided die. Interpret the results as follows:

- 1: Gríma won't let you in to see Théoden. Try again next turn.
- 2: You just missed him! Théoden just left to visit Helm's Deep. Ride to Helm's Deep on your next turn and try again there.
- 3: Éowyn flirts with Aragorn. Théoden becomes infuriated. Try again next turn when he's calmed down.
- 4, 5, 6: Gandalf heals Théoden, and Théoden mobilizes the Rohirrim against the enemies. Take a Plot Complication card and check Théoden off your list.

If you make subsequent trips through Edoras after Théoden is healed you do have to stop when you reach the space, but you don't have to take a Plot Complication card.

If you make subsequent trips through Moria after the Balrog is defeated, you have to stop when you reach the space but you don't have to take a Plot Complication card.

Saruman at Isengard

Once you have landed on Isengard, roll a six-sided die. The results are as follows:

- 1: You taunt Grima Wormtongue by mistake. Try again next turn.
- 2, 3: Saruman refuses to come out to talk. Try again next turn. *However:* if you came here by way of Fangorn and landed on the Extra Turn space there, the Ents will tear Isengard to shreds and Saruman will *have* to listen. In that case, ignore this roll and roll again.
- 4: Saruman comes forth, and Gandalf breaks his staff. Take a Plot Complication card and cross Isengard off your list.
- 5: Not only does Saruman forth, but he repents of all his evil deeds. Cross Isengard off your list, but don't bother taking a card.
- 6: Not only does Saruman come forth and repent, but he joins you in your quest. A little later on, temptation gets the better of him and he tries to steal the Ring. You end up having to kill him. Cross Isengard off your list, but take *two* Plot Complication cards.

If you make subsequent trips through Isengard after Saruman is defeated, you have to stop when you reach the space but you don't have to take a Plot Complication card.